

THE
Integrity of the Holy Scriptures,

AND THEIR

DIVINE INSPIRATION AND AUTHORITY,

VINDICATED AGAINST THE

RECENT ATTACKS UPON THE PENTATEUCH

In a Sermon

PREACHED ON

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

IN THE

Church of the Holy Trinity, Roehampton.

BY THE

REV. GEORGE EDWARD BIBER, LL.D.,

PERPETUAL CURATE OF ROEHAMPTON.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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THE following Sermon, containing thoughts suggested by the Collect of the Day, in connection with the recent attacks upon the Pentateuch, was composed, without any view to publication, with the simple object of endeavouring, by faithful warning and exhortation, to guard those weak in the Faith, and especially the young, against the snares of unbelief. Having, after its delivery, been requested to publish it, the Author consented to do so, in the hope that it may, by the blessing of God, be made more extensively useful. A fuller and more elaborate statement of the argument it contains, together with a refutation in detail of Dr. Colenso's objections to the Pentateuch, will be found in the Author's review of the Bishop of Natal's book, reprinted from the *Church Review*, under the title:—

THE VERACITY AND DIVINE AUTHORITY OF
THE PENTATEUCH VINDICATED, IN A CRITICAL
EXAMINATION OF DR. COLENSO'S BOOK. By the
Rev. G. E. BIBER, LL.D., Perpetual Curate of Rochampton.
WITH AN APPENDIX, CONTAINING TWO LETTERS ON THE
SAME SUBJECT, by the Rev. W. GRESLEY, Prebendary of
Lichfield.—“Church Review” Office, 11, Burleigh Street,
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THE INTEGRITY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

ROM. I. 1, 2.

“THE GOSPEL OF GOD, WHICH HE HAD PROMISED AFORE BY
HIS PROPHETS IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.”

WE have made our prayer this morning, that we may “in such wise hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the Holy Scriptures,” that we may “embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life which God has given us in our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.” The object of that prayer is everlasting life, offered and promised to us in and through JESUS CHRIST our SAVIOUR. The means to the attainment of that object, specified in the prayer, is diligent study of the Holy Scriptures.

What, then, do we mean by the Holy Scriptures? Why do we call them Holy? What connexion have they with our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST?

In the Collect itself in which we have so prayed, they are designated as God’s Holy Word;—that is, the things which God has spoken, put in writing (which is the proper meaning of the term Scripture; Holy Scriptures signifying Holy Writings); and fur-

ther it is asserted in the Collect, that it is God that “has caused *all* Holy Scriptures to be written.”

In the words of S. Paul, quoted from the commencement of his Epistle to the Romans, we further learn that God promised His Gospel, the Gospel or glad tidings concerning His SON our LORD JESUS CHRIST, aforetime by His Prophets in the Holy Scriptures.

Of those Holy Scriptures we are wont, my Christian brethren, to speak with profound reverence. We regard them as God’s Word, which God Himself caused to be put in writing. We look upon them as upon the fountain of our knowledge of God, as upon the standard of our Faith. We, your Ministers, your servants for CHRIST’s sake, as being His messengers, come to you with the Holy Scriptures in our hands; and our office in teaching you consists in this, that we are to assist you in getting a fuller knowledge, and a more perfect understanding, of those Holy Scriptures, with a view to your attainment of everlasting life, being by them “made wise unto salvation.” Your duty, as well as your interest, is to receive that instruction which we impart unto you from the Holy Scriptures, and agreeably to the same, in all meekness and lowliness of heart, in a spirit of faith and love, bringing forth the fruits of holy obedience.

It appears, therefore, a matter of the greatest possible importance, that the meaning of that term, “the Holy Scriptures,” should be rightly understood, and being rightly understood, that the writings so designated should be duly revered amongst us.

If the impression which we have as to the nature, the origin, the authority of Holy Scripture, our belief in it as the Word of God, which He Himself has caused to be written, be well founded, all is well. We can, in that case, rely on the truth of what we read in Holy Scripture, and take comfort thereby.

But if there be any mistake in this matter,—if there be no good ground for looking upon the Holy Scriptures in that light, how then? Whither shall we look for truth?—for truth of any kind, touching those great questions which force themselves upon every thoughtful mind, as to our present condition and future destiny?—above all for *saving* truth, such truth as shall not only inform us what we are, and what we are to be, but show us the way to become what we are to be,—such truth as shall make us “wise unto salvation?”

If it were possible for any man to reach up into heaven, and quench the light of the sun, what should we think of that man? We should hardly account him a benefactor of mankind. And what, then, shall we say, if any man attempt to put out the light of the Holy Scriptures,—to rob men of the truth, the precious truth, making “wise unto salvation,” which is set before our eyes in the Holy Scriptures?

Surely no man can be so wicked, you may say; no man can be so much his own enemy, and the enemy of all mankind, as to endeavour to take away the foundation of all our present comfort, and all our hope for the future. It does seem incredible, yet it is so. Men have been found,—yea, men invested with the sacred office of messengers and Ministers of

CHRIST have been found,—and first and foremost among them one who has been consecrated to the high office of a Bishop, and as such a chief guardian of the Faith,—who make no scruple of declaring that the Holy Scriptures are so termed by an abuse of language; that no such reliance as we have felt all along, is to be placed on them. Not that those who are thus trying to subvert the foundation of men's faith dare to go to work openly and straightforwardly. They do not venture to assert that there is *no* truth in the Holy Scriptures. They take an apparently less offensive course: they insinuate that although it must be acknowledged that there is much contained in them that is true, and which may be regarded as the Word of God, yet they contain much also that is not true,—that is at variance with fact, “unhistoric,” as they mildly term it, which, in plain English, means untrue, fabulous, and fictitious. Now it is important that we should rightly understand what this amounts to. If we cannot rely on the Holy Scriptures as a whole, on their truth in every part, what becomes of our knowledge and our faith? How are we to satisfy ourselves what, in writings alleged to contain a great deal of fable and error mixed up with truth, is to be accepted as true, and what is to be rejected as untrue? Who shall pick out for us the truth from the mass of error with which it is mixed up, if the teaching of these men have any truth in it? On whose judgment are we to rely? On our own, or on some other man's? And how, if we, if that other man, should be mistaken? if we should hold as true any of those things contained in the Holy Scriptures

which are untrue? how, if we should reject any of those things as untrue, which are really true? You see, my brethren, that this smooth-sounding doctrine is a mere subterfuge; that it were better for these teachers of doubt to speak out and to repudiate all belief in the Holy Scriptures as God's Word, than to mock men with their profession of half-belief. If we feel that we should shut our ears against any one that should bid us reject the Holy Scriptures *altogether*, let us not be deceived: let us shut our ears with equal determination against the suggestion that they are but *partially* true.

It will help us greatly in this matter to ascertain what our Divine LORD and Master thought and said on this subject. Now in His discourses we find Him continually appealing to the Scriptures. He bids those who did not believe in Him, "search the Scriptures," because in them they thought they had eternal life; "and they," He adds, "are they which testify of Me."¹ To "fulfil the Scriptures," i.e., to make good that which aforetime God had spoken concerning Him by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, was the constant object of His every word and deed. In the night of His Passion, when His disciples drew the sword in His defence, He rebuked them, telling them that it was in His power to summon legions of angels to His defence. And why did He not do so? "How then," He said, "shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"² And on the evening of the day of His Resurrection, when He suddenly appeared among His disciples, He bade

¹ S. John v. 39.

² S. Matth. xxvi. 54.

them remember that, all the while He had been with them, He had told them that “all things must be fulfilled which were written in *the law of Moses*, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Him;” and, the sacred historian adds, “He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures.”³

From these words of the Evangelist, recording the words of the LORD JESUS Himself, we learn, moreover, what those books were which He designated by the name of “the Scriptures.” They were divided into three parts,—the Law of Moses, i. e., the Five Books of the Pentateuch; the Prophets, i. e., the greater part of the Historical and Prophetic Books; and the Psalms, i. e., the Books called Hagiographa, comprising, besides the Psalms, which, standing first in order, gave the name to this whole division, the Proverbs, the Preacher, and the other Books of the same class, as likewise, some of the historical Books, and the Book of Daniel. It is in these three divisions that the Jews have their Sacred Books, their Holy Scriptures, to this day; being the same as those which we have in our Bibles in the Old Testament, only arranged in different, i. e., in the original order. It is of these Scriptures, “of whose authority,” as our Article expresses it, “never was any doubt in the Church”⁴—neither in the Christian Church, nor in the Jewish Church that went before it—that S. Paul spake when he reminded Timothy that “from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures,” which, he added, “are able to make thee wise

³ S. Luke xxiv. 44, 45.

⁴ Art. vi.

unto salvation, through faith which is in CHRIST JESUS.”⁵ And thereupon S. Paul makes, concerning the whole of the Scriptures of the Old Testament,—which were those he referred to,—this remarkable declaration, whereon the statement in our Collect of to-day is founded,—“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.”⁶ And to the same effect S. Peter, speaking of the Scripture, says that its prophecy “came not in old time by the will of man, but Holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the HOLY GHOST.”⁷ Hence it was that the Apostles and their fellow-labourers, in preaching the Gospel, “reasoned out of the Scriptures,”⁸ which before the time of CHRIST had been translated into the Greek tongue, the then universal language of the civilized world, that so the mystery of the Gospel, revealed by the Scriptures, might be “made known to all nations.”⁹ It was “by the Scriptures” that they “showed that JESUS was the CHRIST;”¹⁰ and they encouraged those to whom they preached, to “search the Scriptures” diligently, “whether those things” which the Apostles preached unto them “were so.”¹¹

Now, my brethren, what becomes of our faith in CHRIST, in the doctrine taught us, agreeably to His command and promise, by His Holy Apostles, to whom He sent the HOLY GHOST from heaven, that He should guide them into all truth, and keep them and the Church of which through them He is the Founder, in the truth “always,” even unto His

⁵ 2 Tim. iii. 15.⁶ 2 Tim. iii. 16.⁷ 2 S. Pet. i. 20.⁸ Acts xvii. 2.⁹ Rom. xvi. 25, 26.¹⁰ Acts xviii. 28.¹¹ Acts xvii. 11.

Coming again, if the Holy Scriptures, and more particularly the Five Books of Moses, the beginning and groundwork of all the other Scriptures, be not wholly true, but true only in part; if the things stated therein to have happened by God's command and under His guidance, never happened at all; if the whole of their contents be, as far as the history goes, nothing more than a tissue of ridiculous, incredible and impossible fictions? Was CHRIST, were His Holy Apostles, so ignorant as not to know this? or, knowing it, were they so untruthful, as to endorse, and that needlessly, we may say, by constant references to them as if they were true, a mass of fables and foolish legends? Were they who laid down their lives for the testimony of the Truth, such cowards as to accommodate themselves to the popular prejudice which believed these Books to be true, they themselves knowing them to be utterly untrue? We may, nay we must, as the matter is put to us, go one step further back, and ask: Has God for the space of three thousand years, which is the age of those Holy Books, palmed off upon the world a tissue of lies, and that in apparent furtherance of His Revealed Truth? What answer can we make to such a question, but that which S. Paul made on a like occasion: "Let God be true, but every man a liar!"¹²

But we need not so high an appeal as the appeal to the character of God as a God of Truth, to the character of CHRIST, who is *the* Truth, to the character of His Apostles, as Holy Men speaking by inspiration of the SPIRIT of Truth, to confute

¹² Rom. iii. 4.

the miserable quibbles by which it is attempted to subvert men's faith in the truth and Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. Those five Books of Moses, of which as Christians we cannot and dare not doubt, seeing that CHRIST and His Apostles accepted them, believed in them, appealed to them as Scriptures "written by inspiration of God," as God's Word written of old, are not in *our* hands alone; nor are *we*, i.e. the whole Christian Church for the last eighteen hundred years, the only witnesses to their truth. They are in the hands of the Jewish nation,—of those who rejected CHRIST and His Apostles, and who are now, and for eighteen centuries have been suffering, for their disobedience and unbelief, the very punishments foretold by Moses, if they refused to hear "that Prophet"¹³ whom the LORD should send unto them. And the Jews, nevertheless, continue to believe in those Scriptures, as the Oracles of God. They observe that very Law which Moses gave them, and which is recorded therein; that Law of which infidel teachers tell us that it never was, nor ever could have been, given. Irksome and inconvenient though that Law be, they scrupulously adhere to it; they think it their greatest misfortune and punishment that many of the chief parts of it they cannot observe, because "the place which God" once "chose to put His Name there,"¹⁴ where alone those parts of the Law can be lawfully observed, has been destroyed and utterly taken away from them. They carry about the world with them as a true history, written by Divine Inspiration, and as such most

¹³ Deut. xviii. 15—19; xxviii. 15—68; S. John i. 21; vi. 14.

¹⁴ Deut. xii. 5.

sacred, the very Book which represents their forefathers as a rebellious and stiffnecked race, and sets upon themselves the brand of reprobates, outcasts from God's favour, suffering the punishment decreed against them of old in that same Book. Verily, in all this they are, according to the word of S. Paul, "as concerning the Gospel, enemies for our sakes;"¹⁵ witnesses to God's ancient Truth, on which the truth of Christianity is founded, without which it cannot be maintained. And further than the Jews, the Samaritans—who of old hated the Jews, who rejected all the other Scriptures of the Old Testament—are keepers of the Five Books of Moses, which they, too, hold sacred as the Oracles of God. How come *they* by those Books, and by that belief concerning them? That they were in the hands of the nation of Israel before the separation of the Ten Tribes from the Kingdom of Judah, upwards of twenty-eight centuries ago, and were then believed by the whole nation to contain their true history, and the Law of God which they were bound to observe, is thus undeniably proved. How then came that nation by that belief? How, when, by whom, were a whole people suddenly persuaded that this was their history, and a Law given them by God Himself, when no such Law had ever been given, and no such events had ever happened, as are related in that history? No answer *can* be given to this question. The supposition is too absurd to be for a moment entertained by any person of common sense, giving the matter the slightest thought.

¹⁵ Rom. xi. 28.

But if these pretended discoveries of modern science and criticism which, it is alleged, prove the Books of Moses to be for the greater part mere fables and inventions, are so easily confuted, why should we lift up our voice against them in this sacred place? We answer,—by reason of the “evil heart of unbelief” which is by nature at the bottom of every man’s heart. There is in every human mind a tendency to disbelieve the Word of God. In some of us, God be praised, that tendency has been so thoroughly crushed by the power of a faith attested by the inner witness of the HOLY SPIRIT, that such attacks upon the truth of Holy Scripture pass by them altogether powerless and harmless. But there are others whose faith is not so strong; who have neither given so much thought to the evidences of their faith, nor yet experienced its living power in their hearts, to such an extent as to make them proof against such attacks. There are, especially, the young men, the rising youths, —who, it may be, have many reasons in their own hearts and lives for wishing the Bible not to be true; who are glad of any excuse for believing it untrue. It is for *their* sakes that we speak; it is *them* that we desire to warn, as faithful watchmen, “watching for their souls.” To them we say: Shut your ears to the evil suggestion that it is doubtful concerning any part of the Holy Scriptures, whether it be true or fabulous. What is the suggestion of that doubt but the question of the Old Serpent in a new shape: “Yea, hath God said?”¹⁶ If you listen to that question, disobedience to the God Whose Word you doubt, will

¹⁶ Gen. iii. 1.

be the certain consequence, and, through that disobedience, the undoing of yourselves.

Tell me not that he who suggests those doubts, calls himself an honest man, “a man of truth.” While he scornfully rejects a large and chief portion of God’s Word, he holds, and means to retain, if he can, the office of a Bishop in the Church of God. What would you think of me, your Minister, brethren, if I were to tell you that I do not believe a word of what is said in the Books of Moses about the coming out of Egypt, and the giving of the Law, and many other things connected therewith; and having told you that I believe it all to be a parcel of absurd fables and fictions, I were nevertheless to stand up, as I have done this day, and, addressing you as if I believed the history of the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai to be God’s truth, were to rehearse in your ears the Ten Commandments, commencing with this declaration: “God spake these words, and said;”—if I were to ask you, as again I have done, to join with me in addressing to God the prayer of this day’s Collect, commencing with the statement: “Blessed Lord, Who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning?” The man that can stand up in the sight of God and His Church, and tell God a lie to His face, thanking Him for having done a thing which in his heart he does not believe that God has done, has no right to present himself in the character of “a man of truth,” and on the strength of it to ask men to put more trust in the doubts he suggests, than in the Faith which the Church of God has held and handed down for upwards of three thousand years.

For that Faith, brethren, it behoves all Christian men “earnestly to contend;”¹⁷ and more especially is this the duty of those who have received the solemn charge to bear witness to the Truth, and to “watch for men’s souls;”¹⁸ who, in receiving that charge, have solemnly pledged themselves to “banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God’s Word.”¹⁹

That pledge is more than a mere formality. It is a necessary condition of the due performance of the office of the Christian Ministry. Nor need we feel any surprise that occasions should arise for redeeming that pledge. We know, on the evidence of an Apostle, that “in the last days perilous times shall come;”²⁰ that “some shall depart from the Faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy;”²¹ that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.”²²

Against all such it is our duty to warn and to guard you, to the best of our ability and power; to exhort you, and especially the young and unwary, to continue in the Faith; which we cannot do better than in the words of the same Apostle: “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known”—as you all have—“the Holy Scriptures,”—not only those which Timothy had known, but, in addition to them, the Scriptures of the Holy Apostles and Evangelists,—“which are able to make thee

¹⁷ S. Jude 3.¹⁸ Heb. xiii. 17.¹⁹ Ordination of Priests.²⁰ 2 Tim. iii. 1.²¹ 1 Tim. iv. 1.²² 2 Tim. iii. 13.

wise unto salvation, through faith which is in CHRIST JESUS.”²³ On this “your most Holy Faith, Beloved,” do you “build up yourselves, praying in the HOLY GHOST; keep yourselves in the love of GOD, looking for the mercy of our LORD JESUS CHRIST unto eternal life.”²⁴ And “now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise GOD our SAVIOUR, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”²⁵

²³ 2 Tim. iii. 14—16.

²⁴ S. Jude 20, 21.

²⁵ S. Jude 24, 25.

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